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Blurb

This was good for the clan! Positive, an amazing impact that would surely ring throughout the ears of the forest for moons to come. Riverclan would finally realize that they are not all perfect and prim. They can make mistakes too!

Comforting himself with his words, Needlepaw closed his eyes. Sleep would easily come with the positive impact he had caused for Riverclan.

(blurb edited 1/6/21)

Dedication

Dedicated to one of my best friends in real life.

Allegiances

RIVERCLAN
Leader
Ripplestar — blue-gray tom with darker gray flecks and kind blue eyes

Deputy
Shadowflame — black and ginger chimera tom with heterochromatic eyes

Medicine Cat
Juniperheart — pretty fawn-colored she-cat

Warriors
Shellberry — tortoiseshell she-cat with striking amber eyes
Darkpool — black tom
Cherryhaze — cross-eyed lilac she-cat with long fur
Timberpelt — scarred brown and white tom with tan paws
Apprentice: Honeypaw
Dovestep — gray cat with blue eyes
Apprentice: Needlepaw
Whiteclaw — white tom with a missing hind claw
Mottleface — calico tom
Heathertalon — tan she-cat with darker tan stripes
Apprentice: Dustpaw
Fidgetwhisker — light gray and white tom
Morningsong — golden she-cat with bright yellow eyes
Apprentice: Quietpaw

Apprentices
Needlepaw — gray tom with yellow eyes
Honeypaw — golden she-cat with yellow-amber eyes
Dustpaw — brown tom with blue eyes
Quietpaw — brown and tan tabby she-cat with green eyes

Queens
Brightsky — ginger she-cat

Starlingfur — gray she-cat

Elders
Otterfern — dark brown tom
Aloe — black and grey she-cat with green eyes; ex-loner

Notice

This book is a work in progress. My upload schedule will be cluttered and wonky because I procrastinate a lot.

Currently, I am working on the following:
• Allegiances
• Chapter 5
• Character Building

This chapter will be updated periodically as things get done.

Chapter 1

[image]

"Needlepaw?"

Needlepaw stirred, but ignored the voice. He wanted to sleep, not get up and be bothered by the mouse-brain that decided to try and wake him
up.

"Needlepaw..." The voice droned out, sounding more like a voice belonging to a she-cat. Though, Needlepaw didn't care much. He silently wished for the voice to stop.

"Needlepaw!"

That was the last straw! Needlepaw's head shot up and a cold glare was directed towards the cat who the voice belonged to. Honeypaw, his sister. So annoying! Couldn't it have been anyone else?

"What, Honeypaw? What!" Needlepaw scowled, clearly irritated. He was getting some good sleep, too, no thanks to his sister.

"Wow, what ruffled your fur?" Honeypaw joked. It didn't land well, considering Needlepaw's grumpy mood. She plastered an awkward smile on her face. "Anyways. Ripplestar wants you on border patrol today with Dovestep, Cherryhaze, and a few other cats. They've been waiting for you."

"Why didn't you just tell them to go without me?" Needlepaw let out a groan. Contradicting his words, he rose to his paws and stretched. Realizing he just asked Honeypaw a question like that (which was not a yes or no question), he retorted, "Nevermind, don't answer my question. You'll give an irrelevant answer anyway. Are you on border patrol, too?"

"Well, no. Sadly. Which totally sucks." Honeypaw pouted, shuffling her paws.

"Aw, too bad." Needlepaw smirked. Truthfully, he felt somewhat bad for Honeypaw. Not that he'd ever admit it.

"Hey!" Honeypaw's mood lightened, noticing Needlepaw's smirk. "Just go get to the patrol group before I make you!" She unsheathed her claws, acting as if she was about to attack Needlepaw.

Needlepaw rolled his eyes and padded out of the den. He passed by Timberpelt (who he thought was so unnecessarily intimidating), giving him a quiet hello and speeding up. He reached the group fairly quickly, who were just by the exit of the camp. Maybe he should have eaten first, but he didn't want to hold up the patrol any longer. It's fine. Border patrols are allowed to eat while on patrol, anyway.

"Look who it is," Dovestep chirped, a friendly smile on their face. They got out of their sitting position. "finally decided to wake up?"

"Knowing him, he wouldn't willingly wake up. Ever. He never does. We were even thinking about going on without you." Darkpool stated monotonely, his eyes focused on the ground beneath everyone's paws.

Needlepaw growled at Darkpool's words. Riverclan had the most fox-hearted cats, Starclan knows. He gave the senior warrior a glare but no retort. He silently wished for Darkpool to get hurt in some way. That'd teach him not to be so mean.

"..Anyways," Dovestep sighed. "let's get going, now that our lovely and bright Needlepaw is here."

The patrol exited camp, with Cherryhaze in front.

Needlepaw resented how she could be so carefree—no—careless and lead a patrol like this with so many rude cats. By so many rude cats, he meant Darkpool. He was glad Darkpool didn't have an apprentice, because if he did his apprentice would become just like him!

Fidgetwhisker nudged Needlepaw slightly. "Catch up." He muttered.

Needlepaw was shaken out of his thoughts. "Whatever." He replied snarkily, though sped up and matched his pace with Dovestep's. At least Dovestep was nice instead of Fidgetwhisker telling him what to do and Darkpool being an all around fox-heart.

Snapping Needlepaw out of his thoughts once again, Cherryhaze's voice rung into his ears.

"Rogue!"

Chapter 2

[image]

Needlepaw's eyes widened with surprise. A rogue? He grinned, unsheathing and sheathing his claws with anticipation. Maybe he shouldn't be as excited as he is—after all, rogues being on clan territory was bad.

Needlepaw didn't feel bad, really. Honestly, Riverclan needed some excitement like a rogue on the territory.

A growl rumbled in Cherryhaze's throat that evolved into a hiss. Her fur bristled, Needlepaw noted. Cherryhaze might be delusional, but she was a little threatening. Credit where credit's due.

Cherryhaze's eyes narrowed into slits. "Who are you? What are you doing on our territory?"

Needlepaw groaned inwardly at her speech. He wanted to see fights, not conversation. Boring!

The rogue flinched. Maybe not too visibly to those in the back of the group, but definitely visibly to Cherryhaze. "Huh? What? Clan territory? Oh wow, I didn't..." They paused for a second, exaggerating their "disbelief" with a quick look around. "...didn't know this was clan territory! Oh no."

"Who are you anyway?" Cherryhaze questioned, calming somewhat. Though, it was clear that she was still on edge.

"For Starclan's sake, just tear this rogue to shreds. They obviously shouldn't be on our territory and are faking all of this "surprise" they have." Darkpool stated, sounding a little disinterested. For once, Needlepaw agreed with him.

So, Needlepaw spoke. "Yeah! Let's beat this rogue up and turn them into crow-food." He smirked, moving towards the front before being stopped by Cherryhaze when he got close enough.

(Needlepaw found that action totally ridiculous. He suddenly wished he was in Shadowclan—they would have sent this rogue running.)

"Darkpool, you are a horrible influence. Needlepaw, don't listen to him." Cherryhaze mumbled.

So boring! Why did Cherryhaze have to be so passive all the time? Needlepaw scowled. "Mouse-brain." Cherryhaze had no business telling him what to do.

Cherryhaze glared at Needlepaw before going back to the rogue. "Answer my question. Who are you?"

"Does it really matter?" The rogue shuffled their paws awkwardly. For some reason, Needlepaw suspected that they were hiding something. Something...foul. Their emotions? Or something greater?

"Yes, it does! Tell us now before you're in Riverclan's fresh-kill pile!" Shellberry exploded from the back.

Needlepaw began to tune everyone out. He moved to the back of the patrol again before realizing that he could easily sneak back into camp and leave this whole mess behind.

Should he really do that? Needlepaw entertained the thought of running back to camp and going back to sleep, before shaking the thoughts away. As much as he hated being here, that'd be a bit rude.

(Needlepaw really disliked the way he'd weave between kindness and doing the 'polite' thing and being rebellious. The fact made him question who he really was.)

Needlepaw sighed and sat down behind the whole group. Suddenly, a foul scent hit his nostrils. He reeled back in horror, covering his nose with one paw. What in Starclan's name was that?

As much as he didn't want to, he removed his paw from his nose and the scent hit him again. How did the rest of the patrol not smell this? He rose to his paws and moved towards the stench. Closer and

closer before pulling back a bush with his claws.

Needlepaw noticed a mouse. Huh. Okay, then what made it smell so bad?

He could only guess. He placed one paw on the mouse and turned it over, noticing maggots feeding on the mouse's belly.

Needlepaw swiftly removed his paw from the maggot-infested, rotten mouse and wiped it on the dirt below his paws. Uh oh.

He ran back towards the patrol group, just now hearing Cherryhaze become angrier at the rogue and the rogue laughing. Darkpool was even angry and trying to keep his composure.

"There's a-" Needlepaw interrupted himself, realizing he wouldn't be heard if he talked quietly. "There's a rotten mouse!" He called out.

Needlepaw could have sworn he saw mischief flash through the rogue's eyes. He brushed it away. Gaining the attention of the group, he pointed with his tail to the direction of the rotten mouse.

"We should send some cats back to camp to report this to Ripplestar. The rest of us will continue the border patrol. This is urgent." Darkpool spoke, his calm and monotone personality returning.

"You're..." Cherryhaze sighed. "You're right, Darkpool."

Darkpool nodded. "Needlepaw, Dovestep, and Fidgetwhisker will go back to camp. Shellberry, Cherryhaze, and I will continue the patrol." He dismissed Needlepaw and Fidgetwhisker with a flick of his tail. "Go."

Needlepaw kicked up some dirt on the ground. He didn't want to go back to camp! He pouted and decided that Darkpool only sent he, Dovestep, and Fidgetwhisker—the only toms besides Darkpool himself—away because he wanted to keep all the she-cats to himself. Yeah, that was it.

Darkpool was such a fox-hearted cat! Needlepaw couldn't believe it. Sending an apprentice away from a border patrol was so

rude. He disliked Darkpool a lot.

Against his own will, Needlepaw, Dovestep, (and Fidgetwhisker, unfortunately) began the trek back to Riverclan to alert Ripplestar of the maggot-infested mouse.

Chapter 3

[image]

Needlepaw padded into camp, Dovestep and Fidgetwhisker not too far behind. A dark cloud of anger still hung over his head, but it had calmed just a little bit. Not to say that he still wasn't mad at Darkpool, he was. He was now hoping more than ever that something horrible would happen to the senior warrior.

Dovestep sighed, noticing Needlepaw's anger. "Stop," They said to the two other toms. "or...actually, uh. Fidgetwhisker, you can wait for us up ahead. Needlepaw and I have to talk."

"What?" Needlepaw glared at his mentor, unsheathing and sheathing his claws with annoyance. "What could you possibly want?"

"Needlepaw, I can tell you're mad. You know you can't always get your way, right? Your mother taught you th..." Dovestep trailed off, clearing their throat. "Morningsong," they emphasized, "taught you that, right?"

"Yeah," Needlepaw said under his breath, his anger only boiling up further. Why did he have to be treated differently just because he came from Windclan? Treated differently for not being yellow-gold like Honeypaw and Morningsong? Treated differently for everything!

"Then why? Why do you act the way that you do? Why are you mad, Needlepaw?"

He couldn't take it anymore! Letting out a yowl, Needlepaw spoke loudly. "Because I'm all so 'different' than everyone else, Dovestep!" There was no turning back now. Tears pricking the corners of the apprentice's eyes, he continued. "No one thinks I'm a Riverclan cat, no one ever has! They only see me as the adopted Windclan kit with a bad attitude. You can't even acknowledge Morningsong as my mother!" Needlepaw's voice crescendo'd and

sounded somewhat teary as he went on.

Needlepaw ended, "I hate you! I hate you, Dovestep! I hate Honeypaw, I hate Morningsong, I hate Ripplestar, I even hate Cherryhaze!" He then turned swiftly and beelined to the apprentice's den, tears now beginning to fall.

As he ran, time seemed to slow.

Everyone's eyes were on him.

Everyone was staring.

Everyone was judging him.

Judging his impulses, his flaws.

Needlepaw felt vulnerable.

It felt like his heart was being torn in two as he caught the eye of Honeypaw, who looked scared and sad.

Morningsong, who shared the same expression as her daughter. Her biological daughter.

Heathertalon, whose determined gaze was broken by skepticism and surprise.

Shadowflame, who looked disappointed in him but had aspects of sadness.

Time sped up again, and suddenly, Needlepaw is in his nest curled up, facing the reed-woven wall.

He had hit his breaking point.

If a breaking point was normally associated with sadness and anger, why did it feel so good?

So good to be pushed over the edge and have everyone's eyes on you, realizing their mistakes and having the face of only regret?

Needlepaw grinned, narrowing his eyes. He had done it. He had

finally impacted the clan, no matter whether it was negative or positive. Really, Needlepaw didn't care. He had finally gotten attention and gotten his mouse-brained clanmates (if he would even regard them as clanmates) to notice what they have done wrong.

The best part?

He didn't feel bad.

No, not at all.

This was good for the clan! Positive, an amazing impact that would surely ring throughout the ears of the forest for moons to come. Riverclan would finally realize that they are not all perfect and prim. They can make mistakes too!

Comforting himself with his words, Needlepaw closed his eyes. Sleep would easily come with the positive impact he had caused for Riverclan.

Chapter 4

[image]

Needlepaw jolted awake. Or, maybe not awake. It definitely felt like it, however.

Dark trees and a dark evironment surrounded him, alongside transparent black mist enveloping his paws. *What a mysterious place.* Needlepaw thought, his skeptical (yet curious) yellow eyes shifting around.

One paw after another, Needlepaw began to traverse the mysterious tree-filled area. It felt as if a weight was on top of him, making it a little tedious to walk. "How annnoying," The apprentice sat down stubbornly. "where even am I?" He called out, some sense of anxiety gnawing in his belly. Remembering the stories Aloe and Otterfern told him about a spooky place called "The Place of No Stars," or the Dark Forest as most of his clanmates would title it, Needlepaw began to believe that he was there.

But you were only supposed to go there if you were dead, he thought? If you were a bad cat? And by no means was Needlepaw a "bad cat." That was just a ridiculous accusation!

Almost comically, a brown tom with darker brown stripes and veiled green eyes appeared behind a tree, slowly making his way towards Needlepaw. He looked just like Quietpaw. Was that something to be...worried about?

Needlepaw leapt to his paws and slowly backed up before remembering the feeling of weight he had when he moved. His head pounded with growing anxiety and fear. That isn't to say he wasn't seriously curious, however. As much as he was, he wasn't sure if he wanted part of this.

The striped tom seemed to be moving a lot faster than he should with the weighted feeling Needlepaw got. Maybe it was just him and not any one else here?

Needlepaw's pounding head grew and grew until his heart almost stopped. The tom was in front of him all of a sudden. His golden eyes flew open with terror.

"Greetings," The tom meowed, sounding much warmer and friendlier than Needlepaw expected. Almost...calming, if you will.

"Where am I? Who are you?" Needlepaw snapped at the tomcat, adopting his bad attitude once more. Not that he would be nice. That was mouse-brained.

"My name is Thornfur." Thornfur introduced, even giving Needlepaw a smile. "You are?" Something about this cat gave Needlepaw some sort of warning. However, Needlepaw answered.

"Needlepaw. My name is Needlepaw." The apprentice greeted, backing up a few pawsteps. He wanted to bring up how Thornfur didn't answer his first question, but Thornfur went on.

"A few friends of mine have told me you've been having troubles in Riverclan, Needlepaw. I just want to say that what I have seen of you impresses me, you are truly going to be one of the finest warriors in the whole clan," Thornfur complimented. "It's only silly to me how your clanmates cannot see that."

Needlepaw was amazed. Thornfur knew so much! But how? What friends did he speak of? Either way, he was glad some cat knew how great he was and how mouse-brained his clanmates were! Needlepaw felt some sort of acceptance wash over him.

"Thank you, Thornfur. It feels so good to finally have someone realize how amazing I am." Needlepaw grinned.

"Of course. I saw what you did today."

"What-"

"Needlepaw, that was the right thing to do. I believe you really knocked some sense into them."

"Of course I did! Riverclan has really learned a lesson, haven't they?" Needlepaw laughed triumphantly. Thornfur was so cool!

Finally. Finally someone knew who he was. They knew *Needlepaw,* they knew him. They knew him. Someone really validated him for the first time in his life who wasn't Morningsong.

"Indeed. Come back later, will you? I believe an important event will take place soon." Thornfur chuckled, not disclosing what the event would be. Needlepaw was curious—what could it be?

Before he could even finish thinking and say goodbye, Needlepaw was surrounded by comfort and woven reeds.

He was back home. A pleasant scent filled his nose, the scent of Morningsong.

His 'mother' nudged him with her nose. Noticing he was awake, Morningsong gave him a happy smile with half-lidded eyes. "It is time for you to become a warrior, Needlepaw. Even if you acted out today, Ripplestar has decided to give you the privilege of being a warrior. Are you excited?"

A warrior! He'd become a warrior! Great! However, reminders of Dovestep's words earlier before he 'acted out' flooded his mind. Then, Thornfur's words came to mind. His clan was filled with mouse-brains and fox-hearts. He spoke, "Yeah, I am excited, Morningsong. Now move. I gotta get to Highrock."

Unbeknownst to Needlepaw, Morningsong's face shifted into one with hidden hurt and surprise at his words.

Needlepaw ran to Highrock, bumping into Heathertalon and Darkpool, ironically. Darkpool turned to glare at him, while Heathertalon stared ahead. He was surprised at his speed after the feeling of fatigue when he met Thornfur.

Starclan knows how glad he was that Darkpool was old, or older than most warriors. He would retire to the elder's den then hopefully wither away. Needlepaw snickered at the thought all while he gave Darkpool a mischevious look and continued running toward Highrock.

Unbeknownst to Needlepaw, Darkpool's face turned to one of

slight surprise rather than a moody glare at his actions.

Needlepaw leapt on the Highrock beside his sister, Honeypaw. He shoved her aside (only visibly to both he, Honeypaw, and those in the front), standing near the edge of the rock. He looked down upon his clanmates.

He would rule these cats as Needlestar and change Riverclan for the better.

Ripplestar emerged and padded up onto the rock, parting his jaws to speak.

"I, Ripplestar, leader of Riverclan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as a warrior in their turn."

The leader turned his head towards both Honeypaw and Needlepaw with a warm smile that felt as if it were directed more towards Honeypaw. "Honeypaw, Needlepaw. Do both of you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

Honeypaw piped up, excitement lacing her tone heavily. "We do!"

With a chuckle, Ripplestar continued. "Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Honeypaw, from this moment on you will be known as Honeytail. Needlepaw, you will be known as Needlefang."

"Honeytail. StarClan honors your determination. Needlefang, Starclan honors your..." Ripplestar paused, his eyes opening frantically. He returned to his calm expression and hesitantly said, "...independence. We welcome both of you as a full warrior of Riverclan."

Ripplestar rested his muzzle on Honeytail's head, Honeytail in return giving Ripplestar a lick on the shoulder. He repeated the process for Needlefang, only being given a lick on the shoulder after

a moment of reluctance.

"Honeytail! Needlefang! Honeytail! Needlefang!" The crowd of Riverclan cats chanted below Needlefang and Honeytail.

While Honeytail looked at Needlefang with pride, Needlefang only looked down at the crowd with an unreadable smirk.

As much as his—no, *this*—clan was undeserving of his blissful presence, Needlefang decided to allow himself a moment of pride.

That was, until he realized that he was not given an assessment. That was required for an apprentice to become a warrior. So, Needlefang thought,

What happened?